

AND WHY NOT ME?

NO. 2162

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1890,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying, I will, be you clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”
Matthew 8:2, 3.

MATTHEW has placed this miracle immediately after the Sermon on the Mount. In all probability some little time intervened in which our Lord had preached at Capernaum and had also healed the people in the street, as we read just now in the first chapter of Mark. It was not the object of Matthew to arrange his facts precisely in the order of time; he had another end in view. After the Sermon on the Mount he gives us remarkable miracles, as if to teach us that *our Lord's words were confirmed by His works*. Our Lord was mighty both in word and deed. His kingdom comes not only with truth, but with power. He worked miracles that men might see with their eyes that the power of God was upon Him and might know that He spoke with divine authority. At this day, beloved, it is even so. Power goes forth with the preaching of the gospel. The words of the Lord Jesus are spirit and life; they are in themselves full of authority and we ought to accept them with ready faith; but since we are slow to believe, the Lord continues to work as well as speak. The “signs following” are still to be perceived; blind eyes are opened, deaf ears are unstopped, hearts of stone are turned to flesh and the dead in sin are quickened. Conversion by divine grace follows the proclamation of the doctrines of grace, for the word is with power. Beloved, we have beheld wonders of regenerating power in our own midst and therefore we are bound to believe in Jesus more and more. Blessed be the divine power which confirms the word! Jesus is never known in the full authority of His word until the Holy Spirit makes us feel the glory of His work within our hearts. We have the word and we pray for more of the work. The Lord speaks to us graciously in the gospel ministry. Oh, that He would now work with us, also, to His own glory!

When our Lord spoke, His words were winged in such a way that they flew far afield. He was heard, not only by the nearer company of His disciples and by a great multitude who gathered about Him, but His words were carried home by the people as they returned to their cottages among the hills, or to their dwellings by the sea. They flew abroad as doves whose wings were covered with silver and they lighted in strange places. His words had so much pungency about them that they could not be forgotten. They had so much of force in them that they worked mightily on the minds of men and were repeated by those who heard them. Among the rest, the words of the Lord Jesus came to a poor leper who dwelt alone outside a city wall. We know little about him; even his name is not mentioned; but to him, also, the glad tidings of a Savior came. He spent much of his time in solitude, or in begging, for he could not follow the pursuits of men, nor earn his bread like other men. The disease of despair was upon him and none could help him in his trouble. He had heard of Jesus, and perhaps on the edge of the crowd had heard Him speak. He felt that there was something divine about the preacher who spoke as never man spoke; this aroused hope within him; he came to Jesus and was healed. What was his name, or his descent, or previous history, we do not know. He ranks among the notable anonymous of earth whose names are written in heaven. No one among you knows where God's word will fly this day; it may be blessed to some outcast in the bush who will read it and find mercy of the Lord. Our congregation is a singular one; made up of persons of every condition of life; from almost every country under heaven! And in it there are specialties of character unknown to the preacher, but the Lord can bless all who hear it. God has brought them here and since the word that shall be spoken is a repetition of Christ's own Word and

is the same gospel which Jesus preached, we expect that it will fly far and wide and will call many a sin-sick soul to the great Physician's feet. The Lord grant it!

As I have often preached upon this leper, you are well acquainted with the story and must almost wonder that I should speak upon him again. I do so that I may dwell upon one single point of it which, I trust, may encourage souls to come to Jesus. I have a burning thirst upon me for the salvation of souls! Where is the man or woman who will give me drink by coming to my Lord? Note the special object of observation; "Behold, there came a leper." Upon this I have to say, in the first place, that *he came of himself*. Secondly, that *he came by himself*, having no comrade to cheer him in the venture. And thirdly, that *he was in himself regarded for coming*.

I. First, then; and this is the main point of this morning's discourse; HE CAME OF HIMSELF. Read in Scripture concerning the miracles of Christ and you will be struck with the way in which many were *led* to Him. A friendly hand conducted the blind, or conducted the little children. Some were bodily *brought* to Christ. We read of a paralyzed man who was "borne of four" and they let him down by ropes through the ceiling to the place where Jesus stood. Others could not come or be brought, but the Lord went to them where they were, on their beds, or waiting at the pool. But here is a case of a man who came by himself, on his own account. I want you to note this because I am persuaded that we have around us those who have nobody to lead them to Christ. Nobody to pray for them; nobody to persuade, exhort, or entreat them; and these may come through the direct operations of the Holy Spirit upon their souls. These are left outside the pale, dwelling on the other side of the line of Christian effort; but they are not beyond the grace of God! This leper came of himself. Though none called him, he plucked up courage and it is written as a wonder; "*Behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him.*"

Note well that this man *knew in himself that his case was a terrible one*. I do not intend to describe the dreadful disease of leprosy. We have, on other occasions, viewed it as God's appointed picture of sin. It was a living death, a source of misery, a center of defilement; and such is sin. Medical men are not clear as to whether the leprosy was ordinarily infectious. It is now believed that it is contagious to a certain degree, but there was no pressing sanitary reason why lepers should have been shut out from all society. The Lord, who intended leprosy under the old theocracy to be the picture of sin, ordained that when once a man was a leper, he should be regarded as unclean in himself and so polluting that every person and thing that he touched became unclean. Hence the leper was dreaded in his every approach to his fellows. He was looked upon as dead while he lived and his case was viewed as beyond human help. Remember how the king of Israel cried out, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man does send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" If a leper did recover it was regarded as a making alive, a resurrection from death. This man knew, even better than anybody else, in what a wretched and loathsome state he was. His disease was ever before him. Leprosy is awful to look upon; what must it be to feel? Leprosy is terrible in description; what must it be in actual endurance? He knew that now, at last, he had come to the last stage of his malady, for Luke describes him as "full of leprosy." He had come to the final stage and the disease was conspicuous upon him. His skin was foul and his joints were rotting. Very likely his fingers, his teeth and hair were gone and soon he must die. Such was the mass of moving death of which we read, "Behold, there came a leper to Him." But he was not kept back by the fact that he was hopelessly and loathsomely diseased.

Let us learn the lesson well. I earnestly pray that some poor guilty one, conscious of sin, horrified of himself, may now venture to come to Jesus! Though he feels the foul disease within him and fears that it has come to its worst, yet may he be emboldened to approach Him who can at once make him clean! If you feel yourself to be a mass of loathsomeness and corruption, or, worse still, hardened and insensible in conscience, yet come to Jesus for healing! Even though you are truly described in our hymn as "self-aborred," yet come to Him who will not abhor you! Come at once, saying, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." Let desperate cases come! Let hopeless cases come! I am imploring the Lord to let it be so. O my brothers and sisters in the Lord, I entreat you, plead with me!

Next, note with regard to this man, that *others gave him up as hopeless*. Persons hurried past him if he stood near the city gate. He was bound, himself, to warn them off by crying, "Unclean, unclean." To him the sweets of friendship and all the comforts of domestic life were unknown; he was a castoff and a

castaway. The rulers of his people had looked upon him and pronounced him unclean and, therefore, he was banished from among men! Is there such a one before me? Do your relatives shun you? Do people in decent society avoid you? Oh, that you had divine grace and faith to come to Jesus just as you are, and fall at His feet and worship Him, for, rest assured, He can make you clean and give you a name and a place among His people! The hopeless are the very people that Jesus loves to save!

No one could or would take him to Jesus. He was too foul to be touched, too far gone to be the subject of hope. Here and there we meet with persons who have so often disappointed their friends that it is small wonder that they now keep them at a distance. Even an affectionate mother has said, "We have tried him many times, sir, but it is of no use. We cannot help him any more for he has drained the family." The father almost prays to forget the prodigal and the elder brother wishes never to see him again. It is a hard case when it comes to that; but such hard cases there are. The world has in it men of whom society is sick. The profligate has been to this charitable person and to the other benevolent individual until everyone is weary of the peter-do-well and no one feels that he could associate with him without becoming himself suspected of vice. By common consent he is judged to be unfit for a reformatory, but well worthy of a prison. No one reasons with him, entreats him, or prays for him. He floats over the ocean of life as an abandoned wreck. He has turned infidel, lately, and even his loving sister, who used to plead with him with tears in her eyes, now shudders when he comes near because his language has grown so sarcastic and blasphemous that the dear girl cannot bear it. Now that no man cares for your soul, how earnestly do I wish that you would care for it yourself! Oh that you would form the singular and saving resolve that you will go to the Lord Jesus on your own account, and so frustrate all the evil prophecies which have been uttered concerning you! Why will you perish, poor soul? Why will you die? If there is such a person now before me, I pray from the bottom of my soul that he or she may now, with fixed determination, come to Jesus! O you angels, may you now have cause to cry out again, "Behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him!" There is one hand which would gladly lead you to Jesus; I stretch it out to you this morning. There is yet one heart that would plead with you to seek salvation; and if there is not another in the world, yet come along with you, come just as you are; and show your misery to the Lord of mercy! Men have written out your death warrant, but the Lord Jesus has not signed it and therefore it cannot be executed. They call you a castaway, but the Lord gathers together the outcasts of Israel. His longsuffering in sparing your life means your salvation—

***"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."***

Come, then, with all your sin about you! Repent of your transgressions and believe in Jesus, and you shall be clean!

In this man's case *there was no precedent to encourage him.* I do not find that our Lord had healed a leper up to that time. I do not think there was a case of the sort. Many diseases He had dealt with, but the Blessed One had not yet encountered "a man full of leprosy." When there are plenty of precedents, there is a kind of paved way for us to travel; but this man had to make his own track. We can reason; "My father and my brother came to Jesus and were saved; why should not I?" This man could use no such argument. I wonder whether the poor creature had heard what Jesus said in the synagogue at Capernaum; it could not have been long before; "Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." I wonder whether he drew any kind of comfort from that utterance? Perhaps not. In any case, he must boldly lead the way and be the first leper that came to Jesus. O my hearer, if never such a sinner as you are has been saved, make bold to lead the way! Dare to approach the living Lord who can make you clean! Do not despair, even though you may not have heard of another sinner of your sort that ever was forgiven.

As to the most of you, my dear hearers, you and the leper must part company on this point. He had no precedents, but you have very many. You know that Christ has saved sinners all around you. Some of you have at home a brother who was as bad as yourself, but he is now converted. You have heard your father tell how far he went astray and yet the Lord brought him to Himself. Many of us now present can assure you that, "This man receives sinners," for He received us. We can witness, assuredly, that He is abundantly able to save, for He has manifested that power in our cases. With these precedents, wherein

the Lord Jesus has saved persons like yourself, come to Him, I pray you, and prove that He is the same now, as ever. Are you a drunkard? Many drunkards have been rescued from their degrading vice! Are you a thief? A liar? A Sabbath-breaker? Such were some of us; but we are washed and made clean! Yes, if you have been an adulterer, or a murderer; can I say worse?—"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Men of the vilest sort have been saved! Why not come to the Lord with confidence, even as this leper came, and put your trust in Him?

Furthermore, *this man had no promise*. I do not find that Jesus ever said, "Come unto Me, you lepers, and I will heal you." I do not know that any of His apostles had been sent forth to preach, saying, "Come to Jesus, all you lepers, and He will cleanse you." There was no promise to that effect, save that our Lord Himself is a consolidated promise. The very fact of His being here below is a mountain range of promises to our fallen race! Without any verbal promise, this man came and said, "Lord, if You will, You can." My dear hearers, I cannot say to any of you that you may not come to Jesus because there is no promise for you. Far from it! If there were no promise, I would exhort you to seek mercy as the Ninevites did when they said, "Who can tell?" But the promises are plentiful as the stars. "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." "Whoever confesses and forsakes his sins shall find mercy." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Will you not be drawn by these promises and will you not come when such a promise as this stands before you; "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out"? The blessed doctrine of election does not hinder you, for all who come *are* elect! The sacred truth of the new birth does not bar you, for he that believes *is* born-again! I pray you, come and show yourself to the great healer and He will not turn you away.

Again, *this man had no invitation*. Our Lord had not called him. He had never said, "Come, you lepers; come, and be healed." There was nobody to command or persuade him to come. There was nobody to cheer him in coming, much less any to compel him to come! Of himself, constrained by a divine impulse unknown to anybody else, this leper resolved to come and found himself welcome though he had not been expressly bidden. To you, my dear hearers, I cannot say that you have no invitation, for we are always crying to you, Come, you weary and heavy laden. Come, for Jesus calls. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." The invitations of mercy are sent out on a broad scale since we are bid to "preach the gospel to every creature." "Whoever will, let him come." Yes, they of the hedges and the highways are to be compelled to come in! What shall I say? If you are lost, it will not be for lack of an invitation! If you turn your back on Christ, you shall not say in hell that you were not entreated to come to Him! I implore you to come to Jesus even as this leper came and I pray the Holy Spirit to make my entreaties effectual with you.

This leper was bold in coming to Jesus because, having nobody to encourage him, *he must have felt himself ashamed as a lone man in the midst of the multitude*. Well he might, for he had no right to be there. Does anybody this morning say, looking round on this great audience, "Here am I, a stranger to everybody! Nobody knows me, and if they did, they would not associate with me. I am out of place among the people of God"? Are you laboring under an awful sense of sin? Are you bowed down under your own unworthiness? Do you feel as one lost in a crowd? The crowd there was nothing very remarkable, but the leper's coming to Jesus was a very notable fact, a scene worth looking at. Hence we see the word, "Behold!" He is coming! Yes, he dares to come! The crowd makes way and the leper falls at Jesus' feet and worships Him, saying, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." Glory be to God, the leper is at the feet of Jesus where infinite love and power are bending over him! O my friend, will you not make a dash for it at this moment? You need not rise up and make any manifest demonstration; but you can in spirit bow at the feet of our Lord! Oh, that the Spirit of God would move you to come to Jesus now! Never mind the crowd! You are put apart by your own feelings. Your broken heart has driven you into a solitary condition. Now come to Jesus before the crowd disperses! Though angels will see it and devils will see it, yet come! Oh, that I could cry; "Behold! Here is a sinner who now, at once, and in this place, casts himself at Jesus' feet!" Grant it, O God! O God the Holy Spirit, work it and work it now, we pray You! And unto the name of Jesus shall be glory evermore!

This is our first head; the leper came of himself, though no one aided or encouraged him.

II. Secondly, THE LEPER CAME BY HIMSELF. This is very unlike the case of the 10 lepers who came to Jesus in a company, concerning whom He asked the question, "Where are the nine?" It is easy to go where 10 are going, but harder to go alone. There are many things which people readily do in company with others that they would not venture upon as separate individuals. My hearer, there is only one of you and when that one feels himself to be loathsome and vile, it seems a daring thing for him to come to Jesus by himself. Yet I trust you will so come.

Here I would enlarge by observing, first, that no doubt *the leper thought out this matter by himself*. Being often alone, he meditated upon what he had heard concerning this great preacher, and he considered both His doctrine and His miracles, and drew his own conclusions. There is always hope for a man when he begins to think about the Lord Jesus; the worst of it is that so many hearers of the gospel put their thinking out and do none of it at home. This man thought over the matter calmly, candidly and hopefully. And he drew from it a solid, manifest and practical conclusion with reference to himself. He did not rest in a general theory about all the world, but he found out a truth of God which concerned *himself*.

Having done so, *he came to the conclusion that our Lord was omnipotent to heal*. Mark well that he came to this conclusion with regard to *himself*. Is it, "Lord, if You will, You can make *lepers* clean"? No, it was a far more personal conclusion. "If You will, You can make *me* clean." That was the crucial point. Jesus could save him, even *him!* Long ago I believed that Christ could save my brothers and sisters; I never had a doubt about that. I never doubted our Lord's power to save anybody until I thought of myself; and then there seemed to be just one case which His omnipotence did not cover. I did not see how Jesus was to save *me*. Singular as it may seem, when a man is under a sense of sin he will not deny the omnipotent power of God's grace as to all the rest of mankind; but secretly he will shut himself out from the range of mercy. Strange cruelty to the self he loves so well! He thinks himself to be just over the border; just beyond the reach of divine grace. This man was not so foolish! He argued, "I am a leper. Yes, but God has healed lepers. I am a leper in the worst state, for I am full of leprosy; and with God all things are possible. This man is sent of God and the power of God is with Him. Therefore I conclude that He can cleanse me if He will." It was well done of the leper. It is a fine thing to have come to such a rational and just conclusion. I wish every person here would come to that conclusion about his own soul! Though you must condemn yourself; though the harshest expression I could use would not slander you in your own esteem, yet it comes to this, thinking it all over; "Christ can save you if He so wills." You are not shut out by any word of Scripture, or by any lack of love or power on the part of the Savior! If you are worse than others, the infinite grace of God will be seen all the more in your salvation! Jesus can save you; even *you!*

Still thinking the subject over, *he saw where the matter hinged*. Everything depended on our Lord's will. Some say that the leper doubted the willingness of Christ; I greatly doubt this interpretation of his words. He simply stated a great truth of God. If Jesus only *willed* it, the leper could be made clean without His saying or doing anything! The whole work depended on the Lord's will that it should be done. His will was the spring of the healing power. Does anybody doubt this? In the work of salvation certain preachers are continually insisting upon the freedom of the *human* will. Truly with these I raise no quarrel; but I would have them equally insist upon the freedom of the *divine* will. Christ has a right to save whom He pleases and though He saves all who trust Him, this, also, is not without *His* will. He said to this man, "I will," and there is no instance in Scripture of a suppliant for healing to whom He said, "I will *not*." Yet His saving grace lies under the control of His own sovereignty; He is no man's debtor; He may do as He wills with His own. It is most certain that, "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." "He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy." This man, in his lonely thoughts, had struck upon this golden nugget of truth! He saw that his hope lay in the will of Christ and where could it lie better? I am afraid that in this matter he excelled some of you, for his own will was right enough, but I fear that, in the cases of some of you, your own will is not yet right with God. It goes without saying that the leper's will was in a right condition and therefore he appeals to Jesus. Is Jesus willing? There was no fear as to that matter! I want all seekers to know that your

salvation can now be worked by the will of Jesus. He has made you willing to receive, and He is assuredly willing to give. If you are saved it will not be because you *deserve* it, but because He freely gives where He pleases, according to the royal bounty of His heart. This man had found out a grand truth of God when he saw that his healing depended upon the will of the Savior.

Then *he submitted himself to that will with joyful hope*. He could not know, of a certainty that he would be healed, for Jesus had not as yet spoken of healing leprosy; but he was positive that He could do it if He would. It is a great thing to believe in the omnipotence of Jesus in the matter of salvation. We have a great advantage over the leper, for we know that He wills to save all sinners who come to Him. The leper set himself before Christ and said, in effect, "Here I am. You see what a wretched creature I am; no worse can ever come to You. But yet, if You will, You can make me clean. I leave my case with You." He prayed intensely, but it was rather in dumb show than in words; but Jesus knew what he meant.

This was the man's practical conclusion from his lonely thinking and *he expressed it before the Lord in words all his own*. In the few words he used he borrowed nothing from any book of prayers, or manual of devotion. He was, in fact, a man of his own order, standing apart from all others. The result of his private thoughts was a brave avowal of his faith in the omnipotence of Jesus.

He did homage to Jesus. He kneeled before Him and worshipped Him. I believe that he did this with the full persuasion of His Deity, for I do not think he could have said, "If You will, You can make me clean," unless he had believed that Jesus was God. Our Savior did not say, "Rise up! You must not worship Me, for I am only a man, and to worship Me would be sheer idolatry." No. Our Lord did not repudiate divine honors when they were offered to Him by His followers! He accepted them as a matter of right, since He counted it not robbery to be equal with God. This man trusted Him whom He worshipped, and worshipped Him whom he trusted. With reverent, humble, importunate prayer he set forth his case and left it in the Savior's hands. Oh, that my hearers would imitate him! I groan in spirit till this is so.

The leper came alone. He came not through persuading friends. I am afraid that some people join the church because other people press them to do so; this is a mistake. Some will say that they believe in Jesus because it will give pleasure to earnest friends; this is mischievous. The leper was under no excitement. He was not the fungus of a revival, but the fruit of divine grace! He did not go into an inquiry room and see all the rest zealous about Jesus and therefore become subject to a like feeling. No! He came alone and came deliberately! And he bowed himself at Jesus' feet. I want any here who are quite unused to religious influences, who have no mother to put her arms around their neck and pray for them, no friends to explain the things of God to them, nevertheless to come to Jesus! You need a Savior! Do you feel that you do? Though not accompanied by others, yet come to Jesus! Come alone, and by yourself. Come at once to Christ and cast yourself at His feet. The thoughtful individual believer is often one of the best of converts, for he is most to be relied on. I like much those who are not imitators, but take their own course in coming to Jesus. Some are carried off their legs during a time of religious excitement and think they are converted when they are not. Some profess faith because their brothers and sisters and friends are doing so; but it is not sufficiently an individual matter of heart with them. I set the leper before you as an example of the courage which comes to Jesus by itself, whether others will come or forbear. I have kept to my one point up to now, and I have all the while been praying the Lord to bring all my unconverted hearers to Jesus now.

III. I close by saying that THIS MAN HIMSELF WAS REWARDED FOR COMING.

Our Lord saw to it that he came not in vain. Poor soul! Suffering as he was and in dread of a terrible death, he no sooner began to come to Christ than *our Lord regarded him with His sympathy*. He looked at him with a different look from what the leper had ever received before. When others glanced at the leper they went by as quickly as they could. And if some came face to face with him they turned away their eyes from the ghastly spectacle. Nobody *pitied* lepers in those days, for they judged them to be smitten of God. They were the objects of horror among men because they were viewed as objects of the wrath of the Most High. But when Jesus saw the afflicted man, we read in Mark that, "He was moved with compassion." I do not think I could fully interpret the Greek word into English. I could hardly

pronounce it, since there is such a complication of consonants in it. Did you ever see a man overcome with emotion? His heart seems to swell. His bosom heaves and tears burst forth. In our Lord's case His whole being was stirred. The depths of His spirit were agitated. He was moved; moved with a fellow-feeling. As soon as He saw the leper at His feet His very look said, "Alas, poor soul, what have you suffered! Into what a state of loathsomeness are you brought! You are to men as a living dung hill, but I do not despise you; I love you, I sympathize with you." Now, my hearer, if you will come to Christ that is how He will meet you. If you sorrow, He sorrows for you. If you loathe sin, He loathes it more than you do and He has pity for the sinner. He is moved with compassion over your miserable state.

As the man came, his lone coming was *rewarded by our Lord touching him*. Nobody else would have touched this man. Peter, James, John and all the rest would have drawn back their garments lest they should come into contact with a leper. As for the crowd, he had no difficulty in making his way, for they gave way before him and he had a ready gangway for himself. But now the Savior *touched* him! There was something wonderfully cheering in that touch! I have heard of a lady who cared for poor crippled children. She found one which was so deformed, diseased, ill-humored and continually crying that no one felt able to love it. She was nursing the child, but the task was no pleasure to her, for, do what she would, the poor child seemed always to cry and always to act an unlovely part. The good woman pitied the child but could not love it. As she had the poor creature in her lap, she dozed and dreamed that Jesus came and bowed over her and told her that, as to her soul, she, also, was sick and loathsome in His sight; but yet He loved her and would manifest Himself to her. When she came to herself, she looked at the poor, misshapen child, and again felt an aversion to it because it was so wretchedly deformed, so disgustingly full of sores, and so passionate and peevish. Under the power of the vision she had beheld, all her feeling of disgust went from her. She felt great tenderness of soul. She pressed the little one to her bosom and kissed its poor, blotchy face. The child opened its eyes with wonder, for it had never been kissed before; and by that kiss a new world was opened to it! The little one became a grateful, happy patient, and was no longer a burden to those who cared for it. How much may come of so little! Even thus our Lord's personal touch of us heals us! His touch, in effect, said to the leper, "I do not loathe you; I will not keep away from you. I will come very near to you. I will bring a heavenly contagion to you and, instead of your communicating disease, you shall receive of My health." Jesus Christ the Lord will come to you, poor seeker, and touch you and prove Himself to be your brother and your friend! Dear soul, if *you* will touch Jesus, He will touch you! If you believe in Him, He will manifest Himself to you! And this morning, you that saw no image but your leprous selves when you came here, shall go home seeing no image but the incarnate God glorified in saving you!

The Lord rewarded his submission with the sovereign word, "I will." As I have already told you, Jesus never says to a seeking soul, "I will not." If you but cast yourself at His feet and believe that He is able to save you, He will say, "I will." The, "I will," of an emperor may have great power over his dominions, but the, "I will," of Christ drives death and hell before Him! It conquers disease, removes despair and floods the world with mercy! The Lord's, "I will," can put away your leprosy of sin and make you perfectly whole! Let there be no mistake about it; I mean you, my hearer, even *you* upon whom I look at this moment. To you is the Word of this salvation sent!

As a reward to the man's faith, our Lord gave a cure, and to increase the wonder, an immediate cure. "Immediately his leprosy was cleansed." How so great a change could be worked we cannot tell. To dissect a miracle is absurd! Every part of the body had been long out of order, certain secretions had been poisoned and certain vessels destroyed. And yet that one command, "Be you clean," restored the leper's ruined frame, then and there! He that created can restore! Can God turn a sinner into a saint in a moment? He can. Niagara comes crashing down from the precipice of rock; could omnipotence *reverse* those deeds and make them leap upwards? God can do all things! In the moral world He is as mighty as in the outer universe. The heart is hard as adamant or as the lower millstone; can He make it soft? Yes, in a moment He can make it tender as bleeding flesh. Do you believe this? If so, submit yourself to the divine energy and ask that this be done unto you! Only believe, without any sort of doubt, that Jesus is the incarnate God, and therefore has all power over human nature to pardon and to cleanse. Jesus can save you though you stand between the open jaws of hell! Jesus can save you though you are foulness

itself, through lying soaked in the filthy lye of lust and unbelief. He can, with a word, make you whiter than snow! Do you believe this? If you believe this, I say, test it by submitting yourself to Jesus that He may be a Savior to you. He will say, "I will, be you clean."

Now to close. I have set the gate of mercy wide open, will you not enter? Oh, that the secret power of the Holy Spirit may gently incline you! By God's help I have thrown out a big net and I hope some of you will be entangled in its meshes. I travail in birth for you this day till you are born unto Jesus!

One thing we may say about this poor leper's case; he could not be any worse if he came to Jesus and was refused; for already he was "full of leprosy." He could be no loser by his appeal to Jesus! And you, my hearer, if you will trust in Jesus, you can be no worse! You can but perish if you go to Him. But, beloved, it is not possible for Jesus to repel a sinner who comes to Him! He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Though he is a leper; though he comes without precedent, without promise, without invitation; yet if he does but come the Lord can in no way or manner cast him out! The gospel cry is, "Come and welcome!"

Jesus loves to see men in health. He takes no pleasure in disease and pain. It is a joy to Him to cleanse and to make whole the souls of men. You will be a happy man if Christ saves you, but Christ will have the bigger share of the happiness, since this was the joy that was set before Him; for which He endured the cross, despising the shame. Our Lord remembers well His wounds by which He procured our healing. He remembers the cruel tree by which He lifts us up from hell. He remembers His agony and bloody sweat, His cross and passion! And He has pity on the guilty for whom He died. I pray that you, also, remember the sufferings of your Lord, and trust Him; trust Him fully and alone. Look at once to Him that lives and was dead, and is alive forevermore; by that look you will live! At this moment worship Him! Bow at His feet! While yet in these seats prostrate your hearts before the Son of God and leave yourselves with Him, that He may give you eternal salvation! As surely as the Lord lives, if you, poor lonely one, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are saved! Go in peace and rejoice forever in the great salvation He has given you, and look to Him yet more and more all the days of your life!

I remember that on January the eighth, many years ago, I looked to Christ and I am praying that this seventh day of September, I who looked may be the means of leading others to look to Him and live. Why not? Dear men and women out of Christ, why not look to Jesus now? My heart breaks for your immediate salvation! Spirit of the living God, draw them to Christ and to His name be glory forever and ever! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 1:21-45.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—909, 509, 304.

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PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST!

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